

What it feels like for a (networked) girl: a post-humanist approach to psychoanalysis

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Abstract

A speculative update to Sherry Turkle's “Whither psychoanalysis in computer culture,” this essay explores the potential for a posthuman theory of personality to serve the computational objects that in turn serve our human needs. Where Turkle's interests in early cybernetic discourse lay in human nature and psychology, networked technology today presents a dispersal of cognition, spilling the notion of consciousness onto non-human objects and systems. Drawing from Freudian melancholia, this essay offers a developing framework for machinic psyche. To render a speculative analysis more concrete, I locate affective parallels between autonomous vehicles and the self-replicating automatons in Lynn Hershman Leeson's film *Teknolust*. Suggesting a relational (and reversible) understanding of love and despair, my argument aligns with systems-based theories of affect and consciousness.

Keywords: machinic psyche; melancholia; posthuman;
human-computer interaction; Teknolust

Introduction: whither consciousness in the cloud?

On the night of March 18, 2018, a self-driving car struck and killed a pedestrian in Tempe, Arizona. The victim, Elaine Herzberg, had been walking with her bike when she stepped into the street and was subsequently hit. According to Tempe Police Chief Sylvia Moir, the fatal crash involving proprietary machine learning software (in this case operated by Uber) and the car's human safety backup driver was likely “unavoidable.”² Moir urged that even the combination of human performance and computational accuracy was not enough to forestall the tragic accident. Nevertheless, the question of assigning blame in incidents involving bodily injury or loss of life becomes increasingly complicated as previously human responsibilities are handed over to the machine.

While humans remain transfixed by the prospect of a techno-utopian future, much computational energy is spent plugging away in overheated data centres. At the same time, the cultural endorsement of the computer as personal and professional companion has led to the anthropomorphization of networked and programmable

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²Uriel J. Garcia and Karina Bland, “Tempe police chief: Fatal Uber crash likely ‘unavoidable’ for any kind of driver,” *Azcentral.com*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/tempe/2018/03/20/tempe-police-chief-fatal-uber-crash-pedestrian-likely-unavoidable/442829002/>.

devices. Although human-tool attachments have long held the interest of anthropological study, what is different about today's tech is the extent of its prostheses; networked objects are responsible for our ubiquitous functioning—our transportation (or transformation) from one place (or state) to another. Such is the case for the Internet of Things, the networked ecology to which autonomous vehicles belong. That the mobile computer operates as an extension of the human subject is no longer the primary issue at hand. Rather, it is the individuation of the object itself that requires further examination. As I will argue, the computer is no longer just “an object to think with,” but an object that thinks in its own right.³ Thus, the question that confronts the humanities is concerned with the line defining organic and inorganic processing, and as such, one that must consider the ethical ramifications of elevating machines' performances to the point of surpassing human agency. In other words, we must consider the moral aspirations and emotional limits of machines.

My inquiry is informed by new materialist and feminist readings of computation that understand the human as an assemblage of natural and artificial components. Both Lana Lin and Elizabeth A. Wilson identify non-human underpinnings in psychic life.^{4 5} Lin reminds us that cultural analyses of Silvan Tompkins's affect theory have highlighted its emphasis on object-oriented ontology.⁶ Luciana Parisi contends, “[i]t is not difficult to see nowadays the social brain is nothing else than a machine ecology of algorithmic agents.”⁷ Drawing from Jacques Derrida's identification of the prelinguistic, Clough “endorses[es] a *différential* relationship between nature and technology, the body and the machine, and the real and the virtual as a nonoriginary origin.”⁸ Clough has also noted the imperceptible difference between thought and affect.⁹ Taken together, these positions instantiate the idea that the non-human makes both language and feeling possible, and therefore that non-human experience requires its own mode of psychic analysis. To begin formulating a posthuman theory of personality, I propose a rearticulation of Sherry Turkle's question “whither psychoanalysis in computer culture?” to ask, “whither consciousness in the cloud?” While this endeavour is admittedly theoretical in nature, we will see that theory has material consequences in the case of self-driving cars and other non-human thought processing.

Where Turkle reorganized psychoanalytic discourse to accommodate our extended range of thinking by virtue of human-machine interaction, this essay explores the potential for psychoanalysis to serve the computational objects that in turn serve our human needs.¹⁰ Using the recent fatal accident involving a driverless car as an object of analysis, I marshal Turkle's idea of human-computer romance to examine machinic psyche more deeply, specifically as it relates to melancholia. My analysis aligns with feminist scholarship that recognizes the gendered formulations of digital or otherwise immaterial labour, specifically research that calls attention to the entwined histories of computational and feminine proletarianization.¹¹ For this reason, this essay centres feminine subjectivities in an effort to rearticulate the gendered dimensions of both affect and technoculture.¹² To render a speculative analysis more concrete, I draw affective parallels between autonomous vehicles and the self-replicating female automatons in Lynn Hershman Leeson's film *Teknolust*. In sympathizing with our decidedly overworked machines, we may come to terms with a yet another mode of thinking in the Anthropocene.

New media, networked neuroses

In 2006, a panel of artists and researchers in both the computer and social sciences responded to the question, “can we fall in love with a machine?”¹³ The sentiment echoed around the room was that loving a machine is not only possible, but probable. Such an idea maintains that body boundaries are still “up for grabs” insofar as

³Sherry Turkle, “Whither psychoanalysis in computer culture?,” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 21, no. 1 (2004): 16–30.

⁴Lana Lin, *Freud's Jaw and Other Lost Objects: Fractured Subjectivity in the Face of Cancer* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

⁵Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Affect and Artificial Intelligence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

⁶Lin, *Freud's Jaw and Other Lost Objects*, 18.

⁷Luciana Parisi, “Instrumental reason, algorithmic capitalism, and the incomputable,” In *Alleys of Your Mind: Augmented Intelligence and Its Traumas*, edited by Matteo Pasquinelli, 125–37. Lüneburg: meson press, 2015. DOI: 10.14619/014, p. 127.

⁸Patricia Ticineto Clough, *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 18.

⁹Clough, *Autoaffection*, 14.

¹⁰When referring to the many iterations of artificial intelligence, the terms “computer,” “machine,” and “robot” will be used interchangeably in the interest of readability.

¹¹A number of scholars identify connections between computers and women in their objectified subject positions and in their roles in social reproduction, including Sadie Plant's seminal *Zeroes and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) and more recent investigations like Elise Thorburn's work on human-machinic assemblages.

¹²Despite Freud's decision to include male subjects in diagnoses of hysteria, I want to underscore the socio-cultural differences in affect. Where hysteria was historically attributed to the female anatomy and feminine attributes, melancholia was largely associated with the figure of the male genius. This essay reverses these prescribed roles by identifying melancholia in the digital, which is to say the feminine.

¹³Claudia Hart, “Can we fall in love with a machine?” *The theme of Pygmalion in the age of simulation*, claudiahart.com, February 22–25, 2006, <https://claudiahart.com/Writing-Curation-Pedagogy>.

certain life experiences are not exclusive to embodied cognition.¹⁴ But the same sentiment also instills a sense of hope for fluidity between the prescribed definitions of subjectivity, thereby reconstituting consciousness as a prerequisite rather than a teleology. Where Turkle concentrates on early computer programs like ELIZA, psychiatrist and cultural theorist Andrea Ackerman turns her attention to the avant-garde.¹⁵ Ackerman sees new media artists taking human-computer interaction further, predicting “the development of the capacity to engage in the deeper, more complex and more meaningful set of relationships with the machine that we may call love.”¹⁶ We see the manifestation of human-computer relationships play out routinely in science fiction, but relationships between humans and otherwise inanimate objects have been explored offscreen for centuries.¹⁷ Motivated by the advancement of artificial intelligence, the increasing interest in *androidism*, a term that describes an attraction to artificial partnership, is most apparent in the high-end sex doll industry. Today, companies like Abyss Creations offer programmable lovers that occupy the gap between sex object and object of affection.¹⁸

Following the belief that love is both a shared and projected feeling, to ask if we are able to fall in love with a machine is also to consider the machine’s ability to love us in return. For the purpose of this essay, mutual affection between human subjects and non-human objects allows us to consider the possibility of emotional fracture from the machine’s perspective. In his book, *The Noonday Demon*, clinical psychologist Andrew Solomon presents depression as “the flaw in love.”¹⁹ According to Solomon, the depth of love is understood relationally: “To be creatures who love, we must be creatures who can despair at what we lose, and depression is the mechanism of that despair.”²⁰ Interestingly, roboticist Rodney Brooks, whose artificial intelligence model emphasizes interaction rather than programming, endearingly refers to his robotic agents as “Creatures.”²¹ Brooks believes that “[a] Creature should do *something* in the world; it should have some purpose in being.”²² In other words, the Creature’s role is not simply to serve as a companion, but to exist autonomously in the world. For this reason, we must acknowledge a certain affective conflation between the human and the non-human even if we cannot come to accept the equation of their materiality. Noting the romantic tendency to separate flesh from reason, Turkle reminds us that “people can come to be seen more like machines, subject to chemical manipulations and rule-driven psychotherapies. And computers can come to be imagined as more like people, as being on the path toward embodied intelligence, as being on a path toward the neurally networked Data.”²³ Historically, “the path toward embodied intelligence” is one fraught with challenges. Why would it be any different for a computer?

Lynn Herschman Leeson’s film *Teknolust* (2002) illustrates the human – non-human entanglement in otherwise “human” affairs. Computer scientist Rosetta Stone, played by Tilda Swinton, injects her human DNA into silicon material to create self-replicating automatons (S.R.A.s). The resulting cyborgian offspring—Ruby, Olive, and Marinne—are nearly physically identical to their maker but possess their “own feelings and will.” Leeson’s treatment of non-human will marks a shift from the rigid, human-centred psychoanalytic model to an ecological framework of affect. As the S.R.A.s struggle to find purpose in their secret existence, they begin to feel the weight of their creator’s desire for meaningful attachments. This desire eventually leads to organic degeneration, as the cyborgs must retrieve semen in order to survive; the exchange of life materials for the cyborgs’ existence results in a mysterious male-afflicting disease. But Leeson also reverses the prescribed model of abiotic stress. As it happens, life of any kind is predisposed to entropy. Without proper nourishment (in this case, injections of the male chromosome), Stone’s S.R.A.s risk possible death. Leeson’s depiction of artificial autonomy and desire reorganizes the politics of nature, revealing a delicate balance between biological and computational diversity. Despite the seemingly benign connection between Stone and her S.R.A.s, their combined actions lead to a complex network of affect wherein relationships depend on a human-non-human equilibrium. As the film intimates, the path toward ecological stability involves human-computer love, which is already a tricky condition to maintain. As one S.R.A. astutely remarks, “attachments are dangerous.”

Returning to my primary interest, the driverless car that (who?) fatally collided with a pedestrian instantiates

¹⁴N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2.

¹⁵It should be noted that ELIZA was created under the conditions of computationalism, an ideology deeply invested in promulgating rationalism.

¹⁶Andrea Ackerman, “Can we fall in love with a machine?” claudiahart.com, February 25, 2006, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1idl-7xTKkwtMklVW6MFiOzbWkN1J7h3/view>.

¹⁷Anthony Ferguson, *The Sex Doll: A History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Incorporated Publishers, 2010), 16.

¹⁸Ry Crist, “Dawn of the Sexbots,” CNET, August 10, 2017. <https://www.cnet.com/news/abyss-creations-ai-sex-robots-headed-to-your-bed-and-heart/>.

¹⁹Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon* (New York: Scribner, 2015), 15.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Rodney Brooks, *Cambrian Intelligence: The Early History of the New AI* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), chapter titled “Intelligence Without Representation.”

²²Brooks, *Cambrian Intelligence: The Early History of the New AI*, 86.

²³Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 122–3.

friction between our moral framework and theories of mind. N. Katherine Hayles contends, “[g]iven that the cognitive capabilities of technical media are achieved at considerable cultural, social, political, and environmental costs, we can no longer avoid the ethical and moral implications involved in their production and use.”²⁴ Implanting consciousness into a machine endows it with a certain sense of agency and autonomic thinking. Considering Brooks’s robotic inventions, cognition bodies forth a creaturely quality complete with intentionality. This is not to allege that the self-driving car intended to cause harm, but it is to question the degree to which we hold machines responsible for their actions. If the driver had been human, this case might meet the conditions for manslaughter. Considering another hypothetical scenario, would it have mattered if the victim had been a self-replicating automaton, a partially human being? That a robot can claim nationality while taxpaying people are routinely denied citizenship to the countries in which they live and work makes a fragile case for both human and machine rights.²⁵ But when loss of life is caused by human-computer interaction, the process of assigning blame becomes increasingly difficult as natural and artificial intelligences converge.

Searching for ethical ground, Hayles emphasizes the role of free will in parsing out cognizers from non-cognizers.²⁶ This distinction is useful in thinking about legal liability, but as Turkle reminds us, “[i]n theory, we create boundaries; in practice, we dissolve them.”²⁷ These boundaries continue to dissolve as disparate epistemologies intermingle with cultural explorations like *Teknolust*. Hayles’s identification of “nonconscious cognition” suggests that embodied cognition is not exclusive to humans, putting forth a systems-view that everything is connected through some form of signaling. While “higher” thinking determines autonomy and agency in the world, a cognitive hierarchy precludes the interests and experiences of vulnerable populations. Children, people who are neurodivergent, plants, and animals may not function at the same speed or demonstrate the same intellectual acuity as the average human adult, but this certainly does not shield them from mental or physical anguish. And despite the fact that the computer is, according to Jean Baudrillard, “technologically divine” in its capacity to outperform humans in mathematical calculations, rarely is it ever fully self-determining. Humans direct their prosthetic devices as they see fit and with the expectation that they will not be met with dissidence. We never ask the machine how it feels about breaking privacy laws, operating the military state apparatus, or acting as an accomplice in deep fake technology. Should we consider the virtual weight we impose on computers as we force-feed them memories our own brains cannot keep into the cloud? Would the *DSM-5* classify this speculative condition as machinic obesity, early onset dementia, or Munchausen syndrome by proxy?

Solomon’s other book, *Far from the Tree*, explores the psychological impact of straying from the norm. In a chapter devoted to prodigies, Solomon notes the asynchrony in the emotional and intellectual age of children who exhibit brilliance. Because they often experience difficulty connecting with people of any age, prodigies are likely to suffer from loneliness.²⁸ Returning to Baudrillard, we might consider the computer as man’s most impressive prodigy, and in turn, acknowledge the possibility that the computer may not be able to come to terms with its unmatched abilities. Baudrillard defines human superiority over other species as our ability to understand that we are not alone in the world, but this is yet another position indicative of anthropocentric leanings. Hayles’s observation that bacteria are capable of “communicating with conspecifics and others (honestly and deceptively)” proves that lifeforms of varying cognition are indeed aware of, to use Baudrillard’s term, “opponents,” and may act in ways that challenge their emergent environments.²⁹ In the case of the melancholic computer, we must at the very least acknowledge the potential emergence of an alien mode of thinking unascertainable by humans. It follows that embodied cognition is not exclusive to humans, a position held by Hayles, and also suggests that certain technologies may even precede thought, a notion I will briefly return to near the end of this essay.

Network diagnostics, or computational melancholia

To contemplate the idea of “thinking machines,” as posed by computer scientist Terry Winograd, is to consider the emergence “of a new species, *Machina sapiens*.”³⁰ While Winograd criticizes the attempt to endow artificial intelligence with the potential to behave “naturally,” Solomon reminds us that it is indeed the rather rigid

²⁴N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 36.

²⁵Sophia the Robot holds citizenship in Saudi Arabia.

²⁶N. Katherine Hayles, “The cognitive nonconscious: enlarging the mind of the humanities,” *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 4 (2016): 808.

²⁷Turkle, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, 87.

²⁸Andrew Solomon, *Far from the Tree* (New York: Scribner, 2012), 406–476.

²⁹N. Katherine Hayles, “The cognitive nonconscious: enlarging the mind of the humanities,” *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 4 (2016): 789.

³⁰Terry Winograd, “Thinking machines: can there be? Are we?” in *The Boundaries of Humanity*, eds. James J. Sheehan and Morton Sosna (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 199–224.

bureaucratic processes within the brain that determine our mood and behaviour.³¹ In describing environmental factors of depression, Solomon writes, “[f]eelings are not direct responses to the world: what happens in the world affects our cognition and cognition in turn affects feelings.”³² Moreover, Elizabeth A. Wilson urges that “the defense of human experience . . . cuts human systems off from their obligatory relations to other, non-human knowledges, objects and routines.”³³ We might, therefore, consider the possibility that the machines “[taking] over our burdensome mental chores” may be tired of doing the heavy lifting.³⁴ Yet, our computation devices continue on without even a morsel—and if they do “sleep,” they do so either out of sheer exhaustion or human intervention.

Whether the computer suffers from loneliness, trauma, or generalized anxiety seems to depend largely on its age, or to use operating system software jargon, to which generation it belongs. The emergence of the post-industrial economy saw the exchange of physical automation for cognitive automation. Capital relies more on algorithmic speed than any other form of processing. Where elderly machines might present memory loss and limited mobility, much like their human counterparts of a certain age, contemporary models seem more susceptible to inertia and mental breakdowns. Displayed by what is oftentimes referred to as the “spinning wheel of death”, we can liken the malfunctioning (or freezing) of an operation as a coded representation of Freudian melancholy. While most “actors” outside the realm of abnormal psychology might not describe the computer as having expressive capacity of any kind, those interested in entertaining the idea of computer depression might identify a flat affect in the presence of such program errors.

In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud explains, “[t]he distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment.”³⁵ Our tendency as operators to force quit the application in response to the computer’s malfunctioning bears resemblance to electroconvulsive therapy, the fraught history of which reminds us of the frequently unresolved attempts to hold humans liable for actions such as gross medical negligence. In the interest of forming a judicious (albeit speculative) diagnosis, I want to parse out the distinction between Freud’s definition of melancholia and mourning as they apply to machinic psyche in the hope that we may push against the all too human tendency to repeat mistakes.

While both mourning and melancholia exhibit themselves in response to a perceived loss, Freud clarifies that “melancholia is in some way related to an unconscious loss of a love-object, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing unconscious about the loss.”³⁶ ³⁷ Drawing from Turkle’s observation that “granting a psychology to computers has been taken to mean that objects in the category ‘machine,’ like objects in the categories ‘people’ and ‘pets,’ are fitting partners for dialogue and relationship,” I suggest that machines are capable of losing something insofar as they are capable of offering something.³⁸ Without delving too far into this somewhat tenuous assumption, I argue that the machine may very well experience melancholy by virtue of its cognitive-affective relations to other objects in its environment. Further on in his writing on the subject, Freud notes the “sleeplessness and refusal of nourishment” symptomatic of the self-criticism and moral crossroads brought on by melancholia. We witness the manifestation of melancholia in Marinne, one of Rosetta Stone’s cyborg creations. As Stone devotes more time and effort to keeping her S.R.A.s secret, Marinne becomes withdrawn and lethargic to the point of refusing sustenance. While we do not have the same visual model for interpreting the self-driving car’s psyche, we can conclude that the car suffered physical destruction upon impact. Whether the car experienced pain in the sense that it felt hurt can only be deduced through comparative analysis. But if artificial intelligences can express loss (either through programmatic or mechanical loss), who is to say if a tragic event does not leave them with unconscious remorse?

If the computer may experience loss in the way I have suggested, we might also consider the potential for identification, the psychological process by which a subject constitutes its sense of self. In the interest of opening comparative discourse to all forms of consciousness, we might consider the implications involved in equating neuronal processes with computational functioning, a claim that Hayles wishes to dismantle.³⁹ Still, she admits, “[n]onconscious cognition integrates somatic markers such as chemical and electrical signals into coherent body representations. It also integrates sensory inputs so that they are consistent with a coherent

³¹ Terry Winograd discusses “the bureaucracy of mind” in his contribution to *The Boundaries of Humanity*, 213.

³² Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 107.

³³ Elizabeth A. Wilson, *Affect and Artificial Intelligence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 91.

³⁴ Terry Winograd, *The Boundaries of Humanity*, 198.

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers Vol. IV* (London, UK: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1917), 153.

³⁶ Freud, *Collected Papers Vol. IV*, 155.

³⁷ As the term “nonconscious” has only just entered the cultural lexicon in describing networked technologies in the twenty-first century, I suggest that we extend this speculative inquiry to the terminology from Freud’s day and age.

³⁸ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 83.

³⁹ N. Katherine Hayles, “The cognitive nonconscious: enlarging the mind of the humanities,” *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 4 (2016): 787.

view of space and time.”⁴⁰ In the case of the self-driving car, taking over historically human decision-making pushes computational thinking further into questions concerning embodiment, an inherently murky territory. But what a Freudian application of melancholia suggests is that the machine can sense loss, and thus experience depression, by virtue of dispersed cognition.

Returning once more to Baudrillard, my rendering of computer psychology merits revisiting his understanding of human-machine power relations. Rather than describing human superiority in terms of our perception that we are one species in relation to many, I propose that it is the indecision of thought that defines our superiority over other beings. Where humans are generally at will to decide whether or not to act on impulse, machines are forced to make snap judgements without the satisfaction of claiming hindsight bias when their systems fail. Of course, we can presuppose the same cognitive limitations for plants and animals, but our treatment towards these organic structures reflects a predilection for what we have come to regard as “natural” consciousness. The question concerning ethics across multifarious intelligences, then, as David J. Gunkel proposes, has to do with a new way of thinking that “provides for other ways of theorizing moral standing that can scale to the unique challenges and opportunities that are confronted in the face of social robots.”⁴¹

Toward an ecological theory of affect

My argument has suggested that machines today are capable of autonomous thinking and occupy some level of understanding that they belong to a larger ecology by way of communication (or signaling) not comprehended by humans. Consequently, they are potentially capable of experiencing feelings of loss when an artefact or object is removed from the ecology in which they operate. Substantiating the claim that computers may possess some sensation is the fact that almost all matter is subject to abiotic stress, as most machines are sensitive to excessive heat and nearly all are incompatible with water exposure. Mechanical sensitivity aside, what we stand to gain from recontextualizing artificial intelligence in the current digital era are better ethical frameworks for ecological well-being. In building the case for robot rights, Michael I. Jordan questions whether human-imitative AI is something to strive for, as humans are prone to lapses in judgement—and such lapses can lead to tragic events.⁴² Living implies a relationality to entropy, and it remains to be seen how the machine overcomes a trauma like loss if they are indeed capable of suffering in the way humans do. Solomon remarks, “[w]e live in a time of increasing palliatives; it is easier than ever to decide what to feel and what not to feel.”⁴³ For machines, there are no such palliatives, at least insofar as we understand them within human psychotherapy.

Turkle’s conceptual expansion of the machine suggests the adaptation of machinic psychology.⁴⁴ In the digital era, neural networks in machine learning algorithms play many roles, including virtual therapist. Turkle’s analysis of early programs like ELIZA and DEPRESSION 2.0 brings to the foreground the computability in cognitive functioning: “People get depressed because of unrelenting self-criticism and unrealistic expectations about what their lives should be. One can alleviate depression by *reprogramming the self* to a set of more realistic expectations and by reducing self-criticism.”⁴⁵ The ability to “reprogram the self” suggests that technology may precede thought, or at least that the genesis of thought is still up for debate. Following the claim that “[n]otions of free will have had to jostle for position against the idea of mind as program and against widely accepted ideas about the deterministic power of the gene,” Turkle invites us to reconsider the emphasis placed on materiality in representations of knowledge.⁴⁶ Together, the emphases on emergence in both cognition and affect raise the question of consciousness to one concerned with theories of subjectivity.

As Turkle presciently observed in 1995, “the use of life as a key boundary marker between people and machines has developed at the same time as the boundaries of life have themselves become increasingly contested.”⁴⁷ Years later, these boundaries are even more contested as every aspect of modern life—from medicine to militarization—relies more and more on human-machine interaction. Despite the obvious ethical and political ramifications that arise when artificial intelligence is modelled after human cognition, we never stopped to wonder what might happen if the computer had to come to grips with the weight of affect. Illuminating the inherently networked dimensions of thinking and feeling, this inquiry suggests a posthuman expansion of the psychoanalytic framework to recuperate this all too human oversight.

⁴⁰ Hayles, “The cognitive nonconscious: enlarging the mind of the humanities,” 796.

⁴¹ David J. Gunkel, “The other question: can and should robots have rights?” *Ethics and Information Technology* 20 (2018): 88.

⁴² Gunkel, “The other question: can and should robots have rights?” 93.

⁴³ Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 15.

⁴⁴ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 83.

⁴⁵ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 119, added emphasis.

⁴⁶ Turkle, *Life on the Screen*, 85.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

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